



OPINION

Quality of Life, Human Services top Steinbrueck's List of Issues

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Seattle is a wonderful place to live, work, and raise a family. Cradled by the mountains and water, we enjoy the diversity and culture of a thriving urban center and the pride and hometown spirit of a small community. We must protect our quality of life, our neighborhoods and the environment from the negative impacts of growth. With these goals in mind, two of the most pressing issues for the City Council to address are preserving our high quality of life and meeting human needs.

Preserving Our High Quality of Life

The spirit of Seattle lies in our diverse neighborhoods. As our city grows -- from Georgetown to Belltown, Alki to View Ridge -- we must preserve the character and integrity of our neighborhoods. In my first 18 months in office I toured 13 neighborhood districts, visiting small businesses, playfields and community centers, senior facilities and child-care centers to learn more about how the City Council can work with citizens everywhere to better understand and meet our community needs.

Traffic jams have become a daily frustration for us all. The popular water taxi between downtown and West Seattle has been one creative solution that not only affords a pleasurable and fast commute, but also relieves some of the traffic congestion. Other transportation improvements can be as simple as adding bicycle lanes, wider sidewalks and pedestrian amenities such as the new University Avenue bus stops, to make travel alternatives to the automobile more attractive. Asthma is now the leading cause of hospitalization among Seattle children, and highest for those living in the poorest neighborhoods. To keep Seattle beautiful and healthy, we must do more to protect our natural environment. To this end, I helped stop medical waste incineration in Seattle and supported efforts to expand access to health care for children.

I led the charge to end logging in the Cedar River watershed -- our region's pure source of water. We are setting an example nationwide for sound and sustainable environmental practices. The City Council just approved a new solid waste plan that expands recycling of household garbage and makes it easier for people living in apartment buildings to recycle. And I am committed to increasing water conservation and reducing the use of pesticides so that our lakes and streams can once again see abundant runs of salmon and trout.

Meeting Human Needs

Despite our region's prosperity, many people are finding it harder to make ends meet. Housing all across the city is increasingly out of reach for many citizens, including seniors who have lived in the city most of their lives, young people and families just starting out. We must create more affordable housing choices if we are to preserve our diversity and keep Seattle livable for people of all ages and incomes.

In my first term, I helped establish a million-dollar low-income housing preservation fund, supported first-time home-buyer programs and expanded affordable housing for hundreds of families and seniors. For the growing numbers of very poor in our city, I am working hard to

reduce homelessness through my Safe Harbors legislation, and I increased funding for food assistance.

Every family should have access to quality child-care and constructive after-school activities for their children. That's why I helped launch Project Lift-Off, to form a stronger partnership with business, labor, schools and faith organizations to pool our community resources so that all children can learn and thrive in a caring and supportive environment.

I love Seattle. As a boy I watched my dad fight to save the Pike Place Market, and learned that by working together, we can preserve what is great about Seattle. As your City Council member, I have worked hard to keep housing affordable, preserve neighborhood integrity, protect our environment, and meet human needs. I want to continue the good work I have begun so that my children -- and future generations -- will enjoy the same high quality of life I had growing up here.